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ABSTRACT

The impact of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' new criteria for developmental studies is addressed. The criteria have implications for new standards for high school graduation and college admission. Since the existence of developmental studies programs is contingent upon standards of college admission, teacher training will, in part, be a determining factor in directions for postsecondary remedial programs. Without some changes in teacher training, there is likely to be considerable numbers of high school graduates in 1988 and later who do not meet the new standards and will have to seek provisional admission into developmental studies programs. There is also a need for some continuous need-based formula in legislation that would equalize implementation of the new criteria. Finally, the assessment and evaluation of the use of the new criteria at the secondary level will also be an influential factor in determining new directions for postsecondary remedial programs. The direction of developmental studies programs will be influenced partly by the interpretation of data from quantitative and qualitative investigations. Overall, the impact of the new criteria on developmental programs will be very gradual. (SW)

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Implications of the New Criteria for Developmental Studies

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES

Abstract

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) new criteria raises questions about their Implications for Developmental Studies in terms of high school graduation and college admission. The critical factors that will affect developmental programs in this regard are teacher training, legislation, and the assessment and evaluation of secondary and post-secondary education. Supply and demand and quality control are important considerations in teacher training. There is a need for some continuous need-based formula in legislation that would equalize implementation of the new criteria. Finally, the nature of assessment and evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative and the ability to distinguish between intent and effect in educational programs is also critical. Overall, the impact of SACS new criteria upon developmental programs will be very gradual.

Implications of the New Criteria for Developmental Studies

The question of implications of the new criteria for Developmental Studies raises some considerations about the processes involved in implementing those criteria in terms of the new standards for high school graduation and college admission. These considerations indicate that impact upon developmental programs will be very gradual and that change in the structure or purpose of developmental programs, in response to the new criteria, may not be seen for the next five to ten years. The critical factors which will ultimately affect developmental programs are teacher training, legislation, and the assessment and evaluation processes at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Each of these factors will be significant in determining if, when, or how the purpose, content, or scope of developmental programs will change, and a considerable amount of time will elapse before any of these barometers will register new directions for post-secondary remedial programs.

Teacher Training

Since the existence of Developmental Studies programs is contingent upon standards of admission to our institutions of higher education, teacher training will, in part, be a determining factor in directions for post-secondary remedial programs. Teacher effectiveness will, to a great extent, influence the success ratios of students who will attempt

to meet the new criteria for regular admissions to the university system. The minimum standards, four units of English, three units of math, three units of science, three units of social science, and two units of foreign language, required for entry into the post-secondary system, will, no doubt, create a need for revised teacher training, programs.

At this time we must consider some of the following questions about teacher personnel. Is the supply there to fill the need? Are there too many teachers in the system who hold provisional certificates? Is there adequate quality control in teacher education at the college level? And, are we, therefore, lacking quality as well as quantity in our current teacher force? The answers to these questions suggest that, without some changes in teacher training, there will still be considerable numbers of high school graduates in 1988, and beyond, who will fall short of the new standards and will, therefore, seek provisional admission into Developmental Studies programs.

The rate at which teacher training programs impact upon secondary education will determine the extent to which change will take place in Developmental Studies, programs. And, again, it will take time before such impact will be affected.

Legislation

Another factor that will, in part, be influential in the direction that post-secondary remedial programs will take is legislation. Legislation is, essentially, the foundation for funding. If we consider the fact that the new state-wide standards encompass a number of locales that vary in socio-economic characteristics, then we must take into account the fact that the success ratios of secondary schools in producing graduates who will meet the new criteria will vary tremendously, from district to district, particularly at the outset. Where the new criteria is most in conflict with the values and resources of the school community, there will likely be a greater elapse of time before the criteria is wholly implemented and manifest in the products of the schools.

Unless state funding initiates and follows some continuous formula based on need, to equalize the implementation of the new criteria, then there will still be a lag in implementation and achievement. By asking questions like "what basis is there for creating equality,"? And, "how long will it take,"? We must realize that, for some time to come there will still be a need for Developmental Studies programs.

Assessment and Evaluation

Finally, the assessment and evaluation of the implementation and achievement of the new criteria at the secondary level will also be an influential factor in determining new directions for post-secondary remedial programs. Whether pedagogical practices provide adequate momentum toward the goals set by the College Board, how individual perceptions influence the mechanism, and the extent to which the new criteria is met, are some of the considerations which will require thorough investigation. The difference between intent and effect has been recognized by Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Wehlage (1982) as an important consideration in assessment and evaluation of reformed curricula and administrative procedures when introduced into the "real world" of schools. As a result of their investigation of a particular reform program and its institutionalization in several schools, these researchers formulated the following questions.

> "How do specific social/cultural characteristices filter into the school to influence instructional practices? What are the implications of teachers' different and potentially conflicting perceptions of their occupational role? Since professionals do have relative autonomy in establishing pedagogical practices, how is this autonomy exercised to create, sustain, and renew occupational

> ideologies? And, what are the roles played by state and local education agencies, teachers' associations and unions, and teacher preparation institutes in establishing and legitimating the new criteria? (p.180)

These and a host of other more traditional questions need to be answered, not only by quantitative, but by qualitative investigation which would include in-depth questionnaire and field study techniques. Assessment and evaluation will take time. Again, the direction of Developmental Studies programs will, in part, be influenced by the interpretation of emerging data.

Conclusions

Assuming that the new criteria are met favorably, then Developmental Studies programs will eventually change in purpose, content, and scope. Dwindling numbers of students seeking provisional admission could mean that Developmental Studies would be grasping its last breath a few years from now. As an alternative to this situation, the larger institutions could raise their standards again, artificially creating a need for developmental programs. However, the new high school curriculum will not guarantee that all of its graduates will qualify for admission to the university within the system, although many will qualify for the colleges. From this perspective, it seems likely that the flagship institution would continue to operate its provisional admissions program

while the smaller schools within the system may elect to discontinue such services. Most immediately, in an effort to remain competitive, Developmental Studies programs might attempt to create more integrated, more inter-disciplinary approaches to instruction across its three basic skills areas.

References

Popkewitz, S., Tabachnick, B., and Wehlage, G. The Myth of educational reform: A study of school responses to a program of change. The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wisconsin, 1982.